

# Separate, But More Than Equal

Neomi Rao and Luis Roth • From admissions to ethnic deans, a look at minorities at Yale

JUST TWO WEEKS INTO HIS FIRST SEMESTER as Dean of Yale College, Richard Brodhead found himself unexpectedly attacked for his administrative review of the need to fill the vacant Chicano deanship.

"That's an insult, it's like a slap in the face," said Black Students Alliance at Yale co-moderator David Bradley TD '94 in the September 10 *Yale Daily News* article credited with launching the campus debate. In a September 24 *Yale Herald* article, president of the Chicano organization Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) Maricela Ramirez '96 threatened to "take action if the decision is not favorable."

Suddenly, the moderately liberal Dean Brodhead, who has participated in the minority freshman orientation program, was being compared to his conservative and less popular predecessor Donald Kagan.

But in an interview with *The Yale Free Press*, Dean Brodhead denied that his administrative review was anything out of the ordinary.

"I feel I've been misrepresented by the previous coverage," he said referring to the September 10 *YDN* article. "I am not talking about getting rid of the cultural centers or even the other cultural deans. I am only talking about rethinking how we will fill the Chicano dean position."

Dean Brodhead pledges to release his decision on the Chicano dean issue on October 22. The flap over his ordinary review process provides a good example of the extraordinary importance of the ethnic support system to minority activists.

Yet this elaborate (and relatively expensive) network of deans, counselors, and cultural houses has had its share of problems since its establishment in the early 1970's. Critics, both white and minority, have questioned some of the undesired consequences of these programs, saying that the structure is inefficient and the programs have fostered racial segregation.

## THE RECRUITMENT OF MINORITIES

The special treatment for minority students begins even before they are admitted thanks to the aggressive Minority Recruitment Program (MRP) run by the admissions office. Minority applicants receive special mailings from MRP and minority students are hired to call applicants during the application process. These letters and phone calls are "warm, informative letters, without any promises," said Derek Gandy, MRP's director.

The outreach to minority communities intends to shatter the myths about Yale which present it as a university which only graduates rich white men like George Bush, the director said. Instead of viewing Yale as an unreachable and distant goal, the recruiting process tries to make Yale accessible to all, said Gandy.

The program has largely suc-

ceeded in its goals. 35 percent of the current undergraduates are classified as "minority." "The Class of '97 is very diverse ethnically, culturally, and racially," declared Gandy proudly.

The quest for racial diversity, however, has sometimes placed minority students into categories with which they feel uncomfortable. This past spring, a Chinese-American applicant named Ludy Chen took offense at the term "students of color" used repeatedly throughout a Yale admissions office pamphlet. When her father complained to the admissions office, he was initially answered with hostility, Chen said. In the end she was not accepted by Yale and is now enrolled at Stanford.

**The Chen episode clearly illustrates how the ideology of diversity can clash with minority interests.**

Gandy disputes Chen's claim saying that Chen's father was treated cordially and that his complaint in no way affected her admission chances. He also reiterated his support for the use of the term, "people of color."

In a phone interview with the *YFP*, Chen explained that she found the implications of the term disturbing. "Initially when I saw the phrase 'person of color,' I felt it had an isolationist tone to it. It seemed to imply that there were white people and then everyone else was considered non-white, or colored."

According to Chen, one of the Chinese-American student recruiters in the MRP acknowledged that the office had received similar complaints about the term in the past.

The Chen episode clearly illustrates how the language and ideol-

ogy of diversity can sometimes clash with the very minority students it is intended to embrace.

## CELEBRATING DIFFERENCE... FROM A DISTANCE

Since 1969, when the university dedicated its first cultural house, the Afro-American Cultural Center, the administration has expanded its support network to include other minority groups. Today, Asian-Americans, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, have received their own cultural houses, along with ethnic deans and counselors.

Advocates of the programs point out that the ethnic deans represents concerns specific to minority groups. The ethnic deans also provide a more sympathetic and un-

selected ethnic groups hardly seems justified, argue opponents of the deanships. If non-minority students at Yale have no particular voice except, perhaps, for their YCC representative, why should each collective of ethnic students receive a professional, faculty representative? Concern about quality teaching, student life and college housing are, after all, shared by every undergraduate, the critics say.

The need for a confidante for minority students concerned about racism seems less questionable, opponents concede. In a situation similar to that of sexual harassment, individuals may suspect that administrators will not believe them or try to cover up wrongdoing. Yet critics charge that the formation of

nic groups within the larger umbrella term "Asian," offend groups like Chicanos and Puerto Ricans. Yet the Chicano and Puerto Rican groups are treated as separate entities, with separate deans, counselors and cultural houses. However, are lumped together, more numerous Asian-American groups, however, are lumped together, a single dean and house.

Dean Brodhead recognizes and sympathizes with this problem, says that the system's overall importance should outweigh its internal contradictions.

"The institutions evolved to meet the changing needs of minority students and different ethnic communities," he said. "I remain committed to maintaining the cultural centers and helping make Yale a more sympathetic and understanding place to minority students."

Brodhead's evaluation also means, say critics, that the deans and houses go to the more numerous and indignant groups, than which groups really benefit. The louder the groups complain, the more likely they receive administrative attention.

One Chicano student wished to remain anonymous and served, "Every group needs a dean... If [any group] puts pressure on the administration, it would almost be forced to give a dean."

## QUESTIONING IRONY

The irony of universities in the 1990's undoing some of the gains of the civil rights movement, not been lost on national cartoonist Garry Trudeau DC '73, creator of the "Doonesbury" cartoon, has featured a university trying to deal with the demands of minority activists for separate and dining halls.

In one frame, Trudeau's student observed, "When this dormitory first opened its doors to black students, it had created separate dormitories on grounds that blacks would be more 'comfortable' in them. I would have been called... I'd rather go down swinging than stand for integration."

Soon-to-be inaugurated student Levin is facing minorities only slightly less uncomfortable than the ones in "Doonesbury". In a *YFP* view, Levin supported Brodhead's review saying, "we have to be free to question everything in a university, including our own methods of providing services to students in our minority governance. That's what we have to do—ask questions and get out the answers after thorough consideration."

As criticisms about other aspects of the ethnic support system over the proper role of the administration in supporting ethnic communities will likely continue, when Dean Brodhead announces his decision on the Chicano deanship this month.

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President Richard Brodhead  
ber 22, 1993. President  
the Chairman of the  
Department and  
Graduate School  
ences. He will be  
October 2.

YFP: The ideal education has been challenged by a preoccupation with multiculturalism, of various like history, into or African-American. It seems that these are a threat to the kind we're supposed to be Yale. In your estimation, what are its goals?

LEVIN: I think historical perspective, of the curriculum, of the years, as you would believe, but through modern literature until the century. We are only. We came to the curriculum the French, Spanish literature only because there were enduring values. I think that the disciplines and the 20th century. We are coming to there are cultural new subjects may apply our critical

YFP: We are about the including languages, but it not only include but rather we different way of educated. Perhaps these new fields broader-based

LEVIN: I would anyone who should only come to women's studies come to Yale some sort of studies. Good instruction we urge students narrow interests, contribution required some attempt to ever over dramatic reality of education most of our large, taking courses. More significant areas culture, which